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ABSTRACT

Three major categories of instruction for a course designed to teach community college students how to effectively listen are functional listening, awareness of auditory disabilities, and interpersonal listening. In functional listening, students learn to listen for the main idea, identify supporting points, summarize accurately, avoid distraction, listen actively, analyze group discussions, and identify situations with more than one main idea. In becoming aware of auditory disabilities, students are acquainted with the basic concept of auditory disabilities and functional awareness of disabilities in self and in others. For interpersonal listening, students identify and practice listening techniques, such as identifying the speaker's message, responding to speaker's messages and identifying speaker's underlying message. Students develop these skills through awareness, identification, and practice. Awareness is accomplished through keeping a journal in which they focus on listening for 10 minutes each day for six consecutive days and identify the 5 W's (who, what, where, when, why) of the listening situation. After developing awareness, students identify their strengths and weaknesses. Finally, additional practice is acquired by use of another journal and a listening lab. (HOD)

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LISTENING INSTRUCTION:

AWARENESS, IDENTIFICATION AND PRACTICE

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Assumptions are made by instructors that students are capable of listening and comprehending vast amounts of information that are thrust upon them. However, the reality is most listeners listen at only a 25% level of efficiency (Steil, Barker, Watson, 1983). Moreover, according to Rankin's hallmark study of communication, of the 70% of each day adults spend in communication, 45% of it is spent listening. (Rankin, 1929) College students spend even more time listening, yet very little, if any of students' coursework is geared toward training them to be efficient listeners. (Barker, et. al., 1981). This skill will not only enable them to be more successful in their academic pursuit but also in their everyday lives and in their careers. Are we as educators properly addressing this vital area of communication? Courses abound on college campuses in reading, writing, and speech; somehow, as educators, we have narrowed our vision and have not properly addressed the skill of listening. What can we do to help our students succeed? The following is a brief summary of a course designed to teach community college students how to effectively listen.

The three major categories of instruction in the course are:

1. Functional Listening
2. Awareness of Auditory Disabilities
3. Interpersonal Listening

Functional Listening: Students learn to listen for the

main idea, identify supporting points, summarize accurately, avoid distractions, listen actively, analyze group discussions and identify situations with more than one main idea.

Awareness of Auditory Disabilities:

Students are acquainted with the basic concept of auditory disabilities and functional awareness of disabilities in self and others.

Interpersonal Listening:

Students identify and practice interpersonal listening techniques such as identifying the speaker's message, responding to speaker' messages and identifying speaker's underlying message.

Students develop these skills throughout the course by applying the AIP technique developed by this author/instructor. Awareness Identification, and Practice (AIP)--Students use these concepts to systematically develop thier listening potentials.

Awareness

Since listening begins so soon after birth, it is easy to assume that people do not need to be taught how to listen. However, listening is not an inherent skill. Perhaps because it appears so easy to listen, we have traditionally thought it not necessary to teach. In schools where listening is taught, listening comprehension has as much as doubled in a few months. (Steil, et.al.,1983) A beginning step in listening instruction

is to raise a student's awareness level of the listening process. To accomplish this students are asked to keep Journal #1 in which they focus on listening for ten minutes each day for six consecutive days and identify the 5 w's of the listening situation--(who, what, where, when, why). Students select a different time and situation each day. They soon learn how difficult it is to listen for ten minutes, how much stimulus and information is processed and, how much information is routinely filtered out. Classroom instruction at this point centers on developing a personal definition of listening In Journal #2 students identify once each day when they found themselves not listening. Was the cause of interrupted listening boredom, fatigue, distractions, (internal or external), or difficult material, etc. Hopefully at this point students have not begun to be aware of their individual listening habits.

Identification

After awareness of listening is heightened, students identify their strengths and weaknesses; to do this they are required to keep a third journal. This journal has five specific steps.

Step 1 - Students list five listening weaknesses. These weaknesses are based on knowledge gained from 1) previous journals 2) Watson/Barker Listening Inventory (which was administered on the first day of class. Class participation

Step 2 - Students list those situations in which poor listening

occurs. Where did they, as a listener, find themselves not listening? Was it in class, in conversation with a friend, on the job, etc.

Step 3 - Students examine their attitudes toward those situation and listening habits. How did they feel when they did not listen well? Do they choose to change poor listen habits?

Step 4 - Students select 2 of the 5 situations in which they have difficulty. They choose 2 poor listening habits that occur in these situations. Next, they identify two techniques that will help them change the habit. A format for this is as follows:

Situation #1 _____

Bad Habit: _____

Techniques for Improvement:

1. _____

2. _____

Step 5 - Students must practice twice using each of the technique they developed. They briefly describe whether or not the techniques worked. If they did, why did they? If they did not, why not?

Practice

Practice is the third step in the AIP approach to listening

instruction. At this point, students realize that the responsibility for improvement rests with them and not with the instructor. The instructor is merely a facilitator whose function is to promote self-improvement. To improve, one must practice. This is accomplished by use of a fourth journal and a listening lab. The journal requires students to select either a television or radio show of ten minutes or more duration and listen and analyze the program. Specifically they are listening for main idea(s), supporting points, purpose, organizational patterns and emotional words. The listening lab activities are quite varied and are taken from cassette programs and activities to be accomplished outside the classroom. A list of the sources available appears in the resource appendix. Because students now know their weaknesses, they are encouraged to select lab activities that will enhance their individual listening skills.

Conclusion

Effective listening skills are vital for the success of college students, yet we have traditionally ignored them when establishing developmental courses. For those not yet teaching courses in listening now is the time to offer students an opportunity to improve in this the most basic of all communication skills. For those already offering listening courses, now is the time to share curriculum ideas. The AIP approach to listening instruction is just one

method. There are many more being implemented and many more wait to be developed.

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(Cassette tapes and student record books)

Listening Skills: How to Be an Active Listener, White Plains N.Y., The Center for Humanities, Inc. (slides and cassette, 2 parts)

Listening Skills: The Art of Active Listening
Pleasantville, New York, 1981. (Slides and cassettes 3 Parts)

Listening the Problem Solver
Passadena, California, Ban Films (video center)

Watson-Barker Listening Test, Spectra Communication Associates
P.O. Box 5031, Contract Station, New Orleans, LA 70118

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